



California Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Toxic Substances Control

Site Mitigation Program

FACT SHEET: CALSITES VALIDATION PROGRAM

Cal Sites Help Desk
(916) 323-3400

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Introduction

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) maintains an automated database which contains information on properties (or "sites") in California where hazardous substances have been released, or where the potential for such a release exists. This database, referred to as "CalSites," is used primarily by DTSC's staff as an informational tool to evaluate and track activities at sites that may have been affected by the release of hazardous substances. The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide useful information to anyone wishing to review a CalSites report, and to present results of the recently completed CalSites Validation Program.

Background

When the CalSites database was created in 1991, it included more than 26,500 potential sites. The sites were compiled by incorporating data from several older databases, principally the Bond Expenditure Plan and the Abandoned Site Program Information System. In the early 1980s many properties that were suspected of being contaminated were discovered and listed solely upon the *potential* for a release, without actual knowledge of a release. A great number of these properties were later found to have no evidence of release and were assigned a "no further action" status. There are now approximately 3,950 CalSites listings. Releases of hazardous substances have been confirmed at 391 of these sites.

Purpose of the Validation Project

Since 1991, CalSites has been used to list potential sites (properties that are suspected of being contaminated with hazardous substances) and to track the investigation and cleanup activities at sites where contamination has been confirmed. However, information in CalSites has been used for purposes other than those for which it was originally designed. Lending institutions, for instance, have relied on CalSites information to determine the suitability of a property as loan collateral. This created difficulties for persons wishing to obtain loans or sell properties listed in CalSites.

In 1993, DTSC began revising, or "validating," CalSites. Listings were re-evaluated and the criteria for incorporating properties into the database were updated. Listings where DTSC has no evidence of a release are now shown as a "deletion." Those marked as "referrals" are listings referred to other program areas or to other agencies. Of the remaining listings, CalSites will continue to track known contaminated sites that are actively undergoing investigation and cleanup activities with regulatory oversight. The database also lists non-active properties. These are properties which may be addressed by DTSC or other agencies, or properties that require no further action. Deletions, referrals, and the remaining key categories in CalSites are explained further in this fact sheet. The status codes used in CalSites printouts for each category are noted as well.

Deletions (Del)

Deletions are listings that have been removed from the database and typically had little file information, or DTSC had no specific information that a release had occurred. A listing was determined to be a deletion if it showed no evidence of a release, no hazardous substance problem, or the location was either a place of residence or an office. A listing was also deleted if the business had changed and the current land use clearly indicated that no problem existed. As of May 1996, approximately 22,800 listings had been deleted from the database. A site was not deleted if it was a processing chemical company or if there was some evidence of a release. However, if further DTSC site investigations indicated that a site did not pose a problem to the environment or public health, a "No Further Action" (NFA) status was assigned.

Referrals (Ref)

Referrals are sites which do not require direct DTSC action or oversight activity and are then referred to another state or local agency. It should be noted that, in many referral cases, DTSC has not confirmed an actual release of hazardous substances. The three current status codes used for referrals are REFRW (Regional Water Quality Control Board); REFRC (RCRA Program); and REFOA (other agencies, such as the Integrated Waste Management Board, or a county agency).

A listing is also included as a referral if it does not fall within the scope of DTSC's Site Mitigation Program, such as in the case of underground fuel tanks. Additionally, if the site presents only minimal risk to public health in the event of a release, it is referred to the appropriate agency. The property may also be designated as a referral if its activity is regulated or investigated by another agency.

Listed Sites

Sites identified as "listed" in the CalSites database are sites where DTSC has confirmed that an unauthorized release of hazardous substance(s) has occurred and that site investigation and cleanup are necessary. It is also an indication that the level of public health/environmental threat posed by the site is such that DTSC involvement is warranted.

Annual Workplan (AWP) confirmed release sites are those where DTSC is actively working to remediate, either in a lead role or support capacity. These sites are generally high priority, high potential risk, confirmed sites and include state enforcement sites, military facilities, and National Priority List sites.

Backlog (BKLG) indicates a confirmed release site on which DTSC is not currently working. These sites, of which there are currently 92, generally become AWP sites when staff and/or financial resources are available. Priorities are based on the degree of long-term threat posed by sites. Before placing a site in the Backlog, DTSC ensures that all necessary actions have been taken to protect the public and the environment from any immediate hazard posed by the site. Often there are no parties available to fund the full cleanup of these sites.

A Certified Property (CERT) designation indicates that the property was previously identified as a confirmed release site and was subsequently certified by DTSC as having been remedied satisfactorily under DTSC oversight. Properties which may not be fully remediated are also listed in the Certified Property category under certain circumstances. For example, a "COM" (Certified Operation and Maintenance) designation on a certified property means that all planned activities necessary to address

the contamination problems have been implemented. However, some of these remedial activities (such as pumping and treating contaminated groundwater) must be continued for many years before complete cleanup will be achieved. In the interim, DTSC will make a determination regarding any land use restrictions that may be necessary to protect public health.

Delisted Property (DLIST) sites are those cases where further extensive investigation and analysis of contamination at a confirmed release site revealed that site conditions do not pose a significant public health or environmental hazard. The property is, therefore, removed (delisted) from the AWP list of sites identified as requiring cleanup. Properties designated as DLIST differ from "Certified" properties in that no cleanup is necessary.

As of May 1996, 284 listings are designated in the Certified, O&M, and Delisted categories.

Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP)

These may be confirmed or unconfirmed release sites where project proponents have requested that DTSC oversee site activities, and have agreed to provide coverage for DTSC's costs. There are 135 VCP projects currently listed in CalSites.

Unconfirmed Sites

A Preliminary Endangerment Assessment (PEA) is the first step in the investigative process. A PEA Required (PEAR) designation indicates DTSC has determined that additional resources should be expended to confirm a suspected release based on current file information. Preliminary Endangerment Assessment in Progress (PEAP) means that DTSC is currently conducting a PEA on the site.

Next Steps

There will be additional listings which should be deleted, referred, or updated as work progresses. Additionally, new listings will appear regularly as attempts are made to develop or transfer properties, when contamination is discovered, or from referrals from other agencies. Once identified, these sites will be entered into the database and prioritized as appropriate for DTSC action.

Availability

DTSC has identified 391 confirmed hazardous substance release sites in California. For a list of these sites, or for more information regarding CalSites, please write or call:

**CalSites Help Desk
DTSC Site Mitigation Program
P.O. Box 806
Sacramento, CA 95812-0806**

Phone: (916) 323-3400

Copies of the printouts for individual sites can be ordered at a cost of \$10.50 per site. A summary version, on a nine-track reel-to-reel computer tape, provides the name, address, and status of all listings in CalSites. This summary tape can be ordered at a cost of \$125. A more detailed version of the CalSites database is available on eight tapes for \$1,120. These charges are subject to change. For more information, please contact the CalSites Help Desk.